

The Duskin AINOWA Foundation

Period  
Sept, 2014 -  
June, 2015

# Trainee Report

The 16th Duskin Leadership  
Training Program in Japan



## Duskin Leadership Training Program in Japan

In 1999, the halfway mark of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons adopted by the United Nation’s Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Duskin AINOWA foundation launched its Leadership Training Program in Japan. This program invites young disabled people with leadership qualities to Japan to learn about disability welfare as well as Japanese culture for 10 months. After completing the training program, the participants are expected to be active leaders for the disabled in their countries.

By 2015, a total of 115 people from 26 countries and regions have studied in Japan, and, upon their return, taken part in various activities as leaders in the field of disability welfare in their home countries.

This is a compilation of the reports of the 16th-year trainees. In this report, six trainees write about what they learned and how they felt throughout their experiences, including learning Japanese language/sign language lessons, individual training programs designed to meet their specific goals in various institutions, unforgettable New Year home-stays with volunteer families, and learning how to ski. We hope you will enjoy reading their stories.

The Duskin AINOWA Foundation extends sincere appreciation to all members at the Japanese Society for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities for taking charge of training, to all the institutions and organizations that kindly provided training opportunities, to the host family members who volunteered to receive the trainees in their homes, and to the AINOWA members. We look forward to your continued support of the Duskin Leadership Training Program in Japan.

### Executive Committee for the Duskin Leadership Training in Japan

Akira Terashima	Professor, Faculty of Comprehensive Welfare, Urawa University
Kazuhiko Yamaguchi	Executive Director, Approved Specified Nonprofit Corporation (TOMO)
Hiroshi Kawamura	Vice Chairman, NPO Assistive Technology Development Organization
Yutaka Takamine	Chairman, Non-Profit Organization Empowerment Okinawa
Kunio Ogura	Secretary General, Empowering the Disabled in Asia
Ichiro Miyamoto	Board Member, Japanese Federation of the Deaf
Junko Ina	Psychiatric Social Worker
Misako Nomura	Director of Information Center, Japanese Society for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities (JSRPD)
Michio Murase	Vice-principal, Yokohama Christian School for the Visually Impaired

(Terms of Members: Apr. 1 2015 - Mar. 31 2017)

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#### Training Schedule

#### Training Schedule

2014	
Sept. 7 - 8	Arrival in Japan
Sept. 9	Opening Ceremony
Sept. 10 - 18	Orientation
Sept. 11 - Dec. 12	Japanese & Sign Language Training
Dec. 7	Japanese Language Proficiency Test
Dec. 11	Presentation of Japanese & Sign Language Skills
Dec. 15 - 25	Group Training 1
Dec. 26 - Jan. 4 2015	Home Stay
2015	
Jan. 13 - May 22	Individual Training
Jan. 23 - 26	Ski Training
Jan. 6 - 9	Group Training 2
Jan. 27 - 30	
Jan. 30	Networking Party
Apr. 27	Exchange Program with Duskin Newly Hired Employees
Apr. 28	Group Training 3
May 18 - Jun. 22	Group Training 4
Jun. 6	Presentation of Training Achievements
Jun. 24	Commencement Ceremony
Jun. 25 - 26	Departure for Home

# I would like to utilize my experience in Japan for the Deaf people in Maldives.

## Dheena LATHEEF



Dheena LATHEEF, Kaafu atoll in Maldives, 21 years of age  
Hearing Impairment (Deaf)

### Fields of interest

- ① History of the modern Deaf movement in Japan
- ② How to solve problems faced by the Deaf in the Maldives

### Self Introduction

My name is Dheena. I am a member of Maldives' deaf association. I come from an island located in the southern part of Maldives. When I was a child, I was the only deaf person in the island. I went to a local primary school but there was no education tailored to the needs of deaf children, so I could not understand what the teachers were saying. A few years later, I moved to a school in Maldives' capital Malé. I was able to follow lessons very easily there, because both teachers and pupils were using sign language. Though I was dreaming about enrolling in a university, I realized that there were no schools that offered higher education for deaf students. I knew that there were so many other obstacles for deaf

people than just being unable to proceed to higher education. In order to solve these problems I decided to join the deaf association. Still, I did not know what I should do to change the situations surrounding deaf people. That was why I applied to the Duskin Leadership Training program, for an opportunity to study in Japan. Before coming to Japan I was quite worried about whether I would be able to keep up with lessons in Japan, but Japanese people were very kind and supported me in a number of ways.

### Unforgettable Memory

#### Home-Stay

I stayed at the home of Ms. Sachiyo Yoshino, in Fukuoka Prefecture. Her father said it was fun to speak with me because by then I was able to communicate in Japanese sign language. Coming from a warm country, the coldness of Japanese winter was quite tough for me. But I had a wonderful time, helping the family, and cooking them dishes from Maldives. They also took me to a number of places and also gave me a chance to try on a kimono, the traditional Japanese garment.

### Ski Training

We went to Niigata Prefecture for our ski training. I had never seen or touched snow, because it never snows in Maldives. It felt strangely wonderful. On the first day I could not ski well at all. I fell over a number of times. But by the second day, I managed to ski by myself. I had so looked forward to the ski training, so I wished it lasted longer, not just two days.

### Individual Training

There are 1,192 islands in Maldives. However, there are only three sign language interpreters, even in the capital. Sign language interpreters are definitely in high demand. This prompted me to learn how to inspire future sign language interpreters. I also learned about research and analysis related to sign language, needed to instruct sign language. This included grammatical attributes of sign language, and the linguistic differences between sign language and phonetic language. I saw that sign language was taught using a method called "natural approach" . It means making the learner learn sign language naturally, like an infant learning a language





without being taught. I was told that complete sign language beginners manage to get to interpreter's level within two to three years, using this approach. The important thing about natural approach is repeated input and conversation in sign language. I would like to use this approach to inspire future sign language interpreters in Maldives.

### The Problems Deaf Women Face and Their Solutions

Often in Maldives, deaf women get raped by hearing men. Many deaf women also, married to hearing men, get subjected to domestic violence. But they cannot consult anyone and often they suffer alone. There are also cases where, deaf children born from hearing parents, face neglect, receive no parental love and become delinquent. I visited deaf women leaders in Nagasaki and Fukuoka Prefectures and asked them what they thought was the best approach to tackle such situations. Especially in Nagasaki, as I stayed at the home of Ms. Motomura, we talked about this into the night to think about problems surrounding deaf women. Through this exchange, I realized the importance of creating an environment where deaf women would feel safe to tell their story. When I go back to Maldives, I would like to create such a place, where women can exchange information, or hear each other's story in a safe and comfortable environment. Ms. Motomura was always kind to me. She cared for me like a mother. At the same time, she was, and still is, a role model for me, working as a leader for deaf women.

### Problems of Deaf People Living on Islands

Nagasaki is the prefecture with the highest number of islands in Japan. I wanted to see the lives of deaf people on the islands, so I visited Tsushima and the Goto Retto islands. Just like Maldives, there are no sign language interpreters in these islands, and this meant there were communication problems between deaf and hearing people. The deaf people in these islands did not have adequate access to information because of the lack of interpreters.

In Tsushima, I actually met up with deaf people living in Tsushima to hear their story, especially the problems they faced in their daily lives. I then put together a report to write down everything I learned from the interviews. I also realized that this report could be used as one of the materials to be used for negotiations with the government.

In the Goto Retto islands, I participated in the meeting of local deaf people, to hear their life stories and what kind of problems they had to overcome till present.

### Education for Deaf Children

I visited several deaf schools. At these schools, the teachers knew everything about the characteristics, behaviors and needs of deaf children, and used a number of approaches to cater to every need. For example, in the infant class, the teachers were talking to children—even newborns—in sign language so that they would naturally acquire sign language as they grew up. Also in class, the teachers made sure to have

eye contact with the children before they started talking. The level of class goes up gradually, from basic to intermediary, to advanced. I noticed that the teachers repeated what they said, until they were sure the children understood. This way, children improve their learning ability and many proceed to universities in Japan. In Maldives, deaf children learn in the same classroom as hearing children, but often the deaf children cannot keep up and drop out. Of course, once they drop out, employment becomes even more difficult. This is why there are so many deaf people in Maldives who cannot find jobs, and even if they do, they tend to become low-wage workers.

At the school, I was also impressed by the use of information technology in class. For deaf children, it is not possible to look at the textbook in their hands and simultaneously listen to the teachers. Likewise, for teachers, it is not easy to make deaf children raise their face from the books they are reading. So what did the teachers do? They put the textbook in a large screen



in front of the children. This way the children could raise their face from the paper textbooks, and also see the teachers.

### Changes that Occurred to Me

Until I came to Japan, I had never thought about support for people with disabilities except for deaf people. I was always only thinking about deaf people. However, after spending some time in Japan with people with other disabilities, my feelings changed. Now, I want to start interacting with people with all kinds of disabilities when I go back to Maldives, not just deaf people. Also, until I came to Japan I was relatively shy, but now I am more assertive and I can ask questions without being shy.

### My Objectives after Returning to Maldives

After I return to Maldives, I would like to focus on the following four goals.

#### 1. Nurturing Future Sign Language Interpreters

Deaf people need sign language interpreters, for everything from medical services to education and to employment. Having more sign language interpreters is directly constructive to the social inclusion and advancement of deaf people.

#### 2. Developing Maldivian Sign Language

The current Maldivian sign language dictionary has only 300 sign language words. Going forward, I would like to analyze and develop Maldivian sign language, with the goal of creating a new sign language dictionary with approximately 3,000 words.



#### 3. Empowerment of Deaf Women

I would like to create a place where deaf women can get together and enjoy talking to each other. In Maldives, deaf women tend to stay home, unable to share their problems and worries with anyone else. I would like to offer a place where they can casually visit and enjoy chatting, and once they feel ready and comfortable to open up, I would like them to share their worries and think about solutions together.

#### 4. Developing Education for Deaf People

There are no deaf schools in Maldives, and it is not possible for deaf people to proceed to university. There are many deaf people with no employment opportunities because they lack proper education. The only way to change

this situation is to change the education for deaf people. It is something that must be done for the future of deaf children.

### Words of Gratitude

My fellow 16th Duskin Leadership trainees are like a family to me. I will be sad as we have to part and go our own ways, but I would like to stay friends with them forever, after each one of us returns to our homeland. Last but not least, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to everyone I met, including everyone from the Duskin AINOWA Foundation and Japanese Society for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities. Thank you so much.



### Training Schedule & Location

### Individual Training Schedule

2015

Jan. 13 - 16 & 21

Kagayaki Pasocon School

Jan. 19 - 20

Japanese Federation of the Deaf

Feb. 3 - 19

NPO Japanese ASL Signers Society

Feb. 23 - 25

National Museum of Ethnology (MINPAKU)

Mar. 1 & 5 - 6 (for three days)

Osaka Association on the Deaf

Mar. 2 - 4

Osaka City School for the Deaf

Mar. 9 - Apr. 5

Nagasaki Information Center for the Deaf

Apr. 7 - 11

Fukuoka Prefectural Center for the Deaf

Apr. 14 - May 12

National Rehabilitation Center for Persons with Disabilities

\* Except Apr. 27 - 28

May 14 - 15

Tsukuba University of Technology

## Good luck on your future work with peers in your community!

Dear Dheena Latheef, how are you?

The one month Dheena was here went by so quickly. At first we were so worried and thought one month may feel too long, because of differences in our age, lifestyle, language and sign language.

She blew away these worries. Dheena's cheerful, charming and friendly personality won people over everywhere. As we spent more time together I felt as if we were a family, and I found it utterly delightful to cook her breakfast, though she was not a morning person.

One day, I came home late and found Dheena waiting for me, with wholeheartedly cooked food of her home country. It was rice with oil, and spicy hard tuna dices— things I had never had before, but indescribably tasty on my empty stomach.

I remember how, every night, we had late night talks about your dreams—you talked about your passion to work hard for deaf women and children of Maldives, and train sign language interpreters.

I am convinced that Dheena's dreams for deaf women and children in her homeland will come true. I wish you good luck on your future work Dheena, working together with Ashfaag and peers in your community.

I am sending all my good thoughts from Nagasaki. Looking forward to the day we see each other again.

Junko Motomura  
Director  
Nagasaki Information Center for the Deaf

## Dear Dheena,

It is already two months since you returned to Maldives. Dheena, you learned a lot in Japan. You also met many people. What are your thoughts on them, and how have you been since? Are you using what you learned in Japan in Maldives? I am sure that you are working very hard for the deaf association and deaf people in Maldives to make their lives better.

I very clearly remember the days we spent together. During the New Year we went to the home of Chairman Nakamura. You looked stunningly beautiful, in the traditional Japanese kimono. I also remember the moment you ate a piece of caramel. You usually did not seem so fond of Japanese food, but when you had that caramel your face instantly brightened up and you said it was tasty and you wanted more (laughs). It has a strong impact and I still remember that moment every now and then (laughs).

We also did a lot of things together, like cultivating the paddy field, and trying to walk on stilts. You also cooked us food from Maldives. It was really delicious. I felt as if I understood the essence of Maldives, where you were born and grew up. I would like to visit Maldives as soon as there is a chance. Dear Dheena, I hope you will be empowered even more, and work towards a higher goal, building on everything you learned and saw in Japan.

I send you all my support from Japan. Looking forward to the day we meet again.

Sachiyo Yoshino  
Host Family

# I would like to devote myself for the development of the Deaf community in Taiwan.

## Jhong-Han WU

Jhong-Han WU, Taipei in Taiwan, 26 years of age  
Hearing Impairment (Hard of hearing)

### Fields of interest

- ① Sign language
- ② Support services for persons with disabilities



### Turning Point of My Life

I am Jhong-Han Wu, from Taiwan. I have a hearing impairment. There are four members of my family: myself, my parents, and my younger sister. After I left school, I worked for two years as a contracted employee of the government. After that, I spent about 18 months in Australia and Ireland on a working holiday, visiting many places and meeting many foreign people. At that time I did not have much knowledge about people with disabilities. I was an orienteer in 2009 Taipei Deaflympics, so of course I knew a little bit about deaf people, but I had no knowledge of international or Taiwanese sign languages. I grew up in hearing people's culture, so my means of communication, and my thought patterns, were those of non-deaf people. It was then that a hearing friend of mine who works for a deaf association in Taiwan told me to apply for the Duskin Leadership Training program—an opportunity to fully engage myself in training to interact with people with disabilities. Unbeknownst to myself at the time, this became a turning point in my life.

### Japanese Language and Japanese Sign Language

Before coming to Japan I thought it was unnecessary to study sign language in Japan because I had studied Japanese for one month already at a Japanese juku (tutoring school attended after the regular school hours). I found out I was wrong. When I was in conversation with hearing people in Japan, I could not really understand the Japanese they were speaking, and I could not understand sign language at all. I felt totally beaten. For three months, our Japanese teachers taught us key vocabulary, grammar and essay writing. The sign language lessons were not only enjoyable, but also an opportunity to gain important knowledge. I began to take interest in sign language and began to have more interactions with others in sign language. It was truly enjoyable to be able to connect to Japanese deaf people and interpreters in sign language.

### Home Stay

At the end of the year, and over the New Year, I had a wonderful experience of staying at the home of

the Furukawa family in Aomori Prefecture. Having lived in the world of hearing people, it was the first experience for me to live with a deaf family. Both the family and I were worried about communication at first, but soon we found out that we could easily communicate in sign language, putting an end to our worries. While I stayed with the family, we cooked together, and they took me to wonderful places, like tourist spots and a scenic spot with a beautiful snowy landscape. In the New Year, we celebrated the Japanese New Year with the family's friends. The young daughter of the Furukawa family taught me sign language and skating, and we played together like a real brother and sister. At the end of the home stay program, the family gave me a gift and





a hand-made photo album. I was deeply touched.

I had so many wonderful experiences during the home-stay program. The family was so kind. They were like friends to me. I will never forget this experience. I was so happy to meet the Furukawa family.

### Individual Training in Japan

#### Nanafukuen

Nanafukuen is a home for elderly deaf people, elderly people who lost their hearing at some point in their life, and elderly people with hearing difficulties. It is a home where these people can live with a sense of security even if they cannot hear. It intends to be a place where 1) people can communicate freely and 2) deaf people can contribute to the local community. The concept that elderly deaf people need a place where they can communicate freely, is very important. Let's compare Taiwan and Japan. There are many general elderly people's homes and services for the elderly in Taiwan, but very few homes for elderly deaf people. It is still at a developing stage. Facilities for elderly deaf people are very important. Elderly deaf people will have communication problems if they go to general elderly people's homes. They will not be able to communicate with other elderly people, and that can isolate themselves and accelerate the process of ageing. As there will be more and more elderly people in future, this is a very important issue to consider.

#### Presentation Training

At NPO Japanese ASL Signers Society,

I was given my first ever opportunity to learn how to give a presentation in sign language. When I was a student, I gave all my presentations and speeches vocally. The sign language presentation methods were totally different from vocal presentation. I had to learn the right posture, the right sign language expressions for a public presentation, and the hands' position and facial expressions for sign language. These were all very important to know. Finally, I gave a 1-hour speech in sign language in front of the audience who gave me a feedback. I learned methods to continuously improve my future presentations, for example using that feedback. During the subsequent training, I had several occasions where I was asked to give a presentation. Thanks to the experience of the presentation training at Japanese ASL Signers Society, I was able to give the presentations confidently.

#### The Support & Service Center for and of the Deafblind "SMILE"

Ever since I was in Taiwan I had known the term "deafblind," even though I had never met any deafblind person in real life. At SMILE, I received training where I learned about deafblind people, and how to support them. I was also able to interact with deafblind people, using tactile sign language. I learned about how to help deafblind people as an interpreter, on the actual work site. Interpretation by tactile sign language and finger Braille is useful for deafblind people because deafblind people have both hearing and visual impairments. But it is rather hard to

help deafblind people with interpretation. For example, if a deafblind person wants to visit a museum, the interpreter needs to explain the exhibited item's shape in tactile sign language so that the deafblind person can have an image of what the artifact look like. Namely the interpreter needs high interpretation skills so that the interpretation can convey the accurate image of the artifact.

I saw items hand-crafted by deafblind people, and their Japanese drum performances. It totally took me by surprise. The items were immaculate and wonderful with multitudes of colors. At first, when I was told they were going to give a Japanese drum performance I could not really believe it. How will they do it? The deafblind people beat the drums when the hearing people behind them gave them a signal, tapping their shoulders. It was an astounding, wonderful performance. I was also given an opportunity to accompany a deafblind person, running together. I think I will be able to do this in Taiwan too, because I have been given guidance about the technique and what to watch out for, while running alongside a deafblind person. Everyone at SMILE was very kind, had a strong character, and was very positive. They were also very fun, and told me – I knew nothing at the time – about tactile sign language, deafblind people's culture, and other information concerning deafblind people, in great detail. Everyone at SMILE was very hard-working and courageous. They taught me a lot about life. The most important thing I learned at SMILE was the importance of communication.



For deafblind people, it is very difficult to communicate their emotions and thoughts. Interpreters play a great role there. First, it is very important for the deafblind person and the interpreter to build trust. Then, through the interpreter, the deafblind person begins to gain information, and realize his / her rights for knowledge. It is impossible for people to ignore deafblind people's voice that comes out of such processes, so communication begins to happen, both ways. From the deafblind person to the people, and vice versa.

**Tsukuba University of Technology**

When I was at university, all my classmates were hearing students, so I can say I grew up in the culture of hearing people. At Tsukuba University of Technology, for the first time in my life I had a chance to study with students with a hearing impairment. Our teacher, Osugi sensei, taught us theories related to hearing impairment, sign language linguistics, and sign language survey methods.

**Changing Oneself :**

I have a hearing impairment, but I never saw myself as a deaf person because I lived in the world of hearers. This changed after the training in Japan and I was able to accept the fact that I was someone who could not hear. I had so much to learn from the community of deaf people and people with other disabilities, and also from their life stories. More than anything else, learning sign language deepened my understanding of deaf culture. It had a big impact on my way of thinking. For me, hearing people's culture and deaf culture are both important. It is important to be fair to people with disabilities and have respect for each other. More than anything else, empathy is very important.



**Goals after Going Home :**

I have goals on three levels.  
 Short term: learning Taiwanese sign language, and supporting the 8th Asia Pacific Deaf Sports Games.  
 I have managed to learn Japanese sign language, but I still cannot communicate in Taiwanese sign language. So first I want to learn Taiwanese sign language. Then, I would like to use my Japanese and Taiwanese sign languages to support the Japan team in the Deaf Sports Games held in Taiwan in October.  
 Mid-term: I would like to be involved in many activities of the deaf association. After amassing experiences there, I would like to develop sign language interpreters. If there are more sign language interpreters, it will lead to more employment of deaf people, and eventually dissolve discrimination deaf people experience at work.  
 Long-term: I would like to participate in deaf conferences of the Asia-Pacific

region, or global conferences, and relay international information to deaf people in Taiwan.

**Lastly**

The 10-month training in Japan became a big turning point for my life. I gained a wide range of knowledge, and deepened my understanding of how to understand and empathize with people with disabilities. This is something I was not able to do before. After I go back to Taiwan, I will devote myself to the development of deaf community. I would like to express my gratitude to everyone from the Duskin AINOWA Foundation, Japanese Society for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities, Toyama Sunrise, my Japanese and Japanese sign language teachers, my host Furukawa Family, and everyone at my training destinations. I am also thankful to my fellow trainees, we helped each other for 10 months. Thank you so much.



Training Schedule & Location

Individual Training Schedule

2015	
Jan. 15 - 18	JDOA: Japan Deaf Orienteering Association
Mar. 3 - 18	NPO Japanese ASL Signers Society
Mar. 24 - May 5	The Support & Service Center for and of the Deafblind "SMILE"
* Except Apr. 27 - 28	
May 8	Tokyo Sign Language Interpreter Dispatch Service Center
May 11 - 15	Tsukuba University of Technology

## I believe your success after you return to your home country.

\*nickname: Michael

Michael had not studied sign language in his home country. For all deaf trainees who come to Japan, it is mandatory to study Japanese and Japanese sign language for three months after arriving in Japan. Michael did not stop studying when the three months was over. He was aware that his sign language was inadequate and continued studying on his own. I saw him working twice as hard as most people, watching sign language programs on NHK (a Japanese TV channel) and sign language videos on the Internet. I imagine it must have been a great dilemma for him, to study sign language that he had not studied in his home country, on foreign soil. But he conquered that dilemma and throughout the training he remained extremely hard-working. It was very touching for us to see that.

In his final speech, Michael said that deaf people's culture and hearing people's culture were equally important. He also stressed the importance of communication based on equality, respect and empathy. These were the words from the bottom of his heart, after he struggled to find his own identity, struggled with sign language and finally succeeding in broadening his circle of communication. Michael is very spontaneous, hard-working and has a clean image. I am sure, after he returns to his home country, he will be very active across all domains, not limited to hard of hearing, deaf, or non-disabled. Taiwan is not so far from Japan. We look forward to seeing him again.

Kumiko Takakusa  
Head of Staff Members  
Japanese ASL Signers Society

## "?????" changed to "!!!!!"

\*nickname: Michael

"?????"

This was the impression I had when I met Michael for the first time soon after he arrived in Japan. Why can't he do Taiwanese sign language? What does he want to study in Japan? What does he think of himself, being deaf? How is he going to communicate with his fellow trainees?

All these "?????" disappeared when we welcomed Michael at Tsukuba University of Technology, after he completed six months of his training. My impression was rather the opposite and was more a "!!!!!" He was able to express himself fluently in Japanese sign language! He was able to look into himself as a deaf person and was able to analyze himself! He had a significant understanding of what Japan's deaf community had achieved over the years and their future issues!

By having the knowledge of many kanji (Japanese characters), he could now communicate smoothly with other people!

Michael was literally reborn with this training in Japan. I am very glad to see that he is able to respect his new self, as well as his past self and those who care for him. I hope that with this experience in hand, he can learn Taiwanese sign language when he goes back to Taiwan, deepen his interactions with deaf people in Taiwan, and wholeheartedly work to resolve the issues faced by Taiwan's deaf community.

Yutaka Osugi,  
Professor,  
Research and Support Center on Higher Education  
for the Hearing and Visually Impaired,  
Tsukuba University of Technology

# My dream is to become the first female secretary-general of the UN!

## Ummul KHER



Ummul KHER, Delhi in India, 26 years of age  
Physical (Electric wheelchair)

### Fields of interest

- 1 Disability rights (including activities of women with disabilities)
- 2 Sign language and Braille
- 3 Activities for persons with disabilities in rural areas

### 1. How I Came to Know about Japan

#### “Japan- the country of the rising sun.”

Before I begin, let me talk about how I came to know about Japan. It happened when I was 7. I was reading a magazine for children, when I came across an article entitled “Japan: the country of the rising sun.” It left a very strong impression on me and from then on Japan became the country I liked most. I began to collect information about Japan’s history and culture, and dreamed someday, I would be able to

go to Japan. My dream came true, when I was chosen as one of the trainees for the Duskin leadership program.

### 2. Skiing

#### Adventure of People with Disabilities = Triumph of the Spirit

Every part of the training in Japan had important meanings. For example, the ski training was not just two days of having fun. Through the skiing, we learned that people with disabilities can enjoy adventures just like others. For most people with disabilities, from various countries, every day is spent worrying about their physical conditions. For them, having an adventure is out of the question, let alone skiing. Until I came to Japan, I never even wanted to ski. Because of my disability my bones break very easily and skiing seemed to pose too much risk. However, I was prompted to try it because I heard that someone, an ex-Duskin trainee with the same disability as mine, had ventured out skiing. People with disabilities can ski down and conquer high, slippery, snowy mountains on bi-skis. Through

the ski training, we felt the triumph of the human spirit.

### 3. What I have Learnt in Japan

#### Independent Living

I had always wished so strongly to live independently. I lived in the capital of New Delhi but I had never heard about independent living. This motivated me to work hard while I experienced and learned about independent living in Japan. “Making choices and decisions by oneself, and taking responsibility for the choices and decisions one has made” is the most important concept in independent living movement. However in most developing countries around the world, it is still believed people with disabilities have to live with their families even if they get older. Usually in these countries, there are no government pensions, no barrier-free infrastructure, and no helper system. Despite all this I believe that in future people with disabilities in India will also be able to live independently. I visited several centers for independent living in Japan. They had same goals, but activities were different from center to center. It made





me hopeful on the realization that we could establish our own center of independent living, suited to the needs of and sources available to people with disabilities in our country.

#### **Peer Counseling**

At university I studied psychology, including a variety of counseling methods, but not peer counseling. In fact I had never even heard about it before. At Center for Independent Living 'RingRing,' I learned about peer counseling tailored to each person with different disabilities, for example, people with intellectual disabilities or severe disabilities. I think peer counseling is very important for empowering people with disabilities. There are three objectives in peer counseling.

Recovering self-trust: in another word, liking oneself. People with disabilities often dislike themselves because of various experiences, or lose the identity as a person with disability.

Self-acceptance is very important before people with disabilities engage themselves in activities to change society.

Reconstructing relationships: it means cooperating with other people to build a good network.

Changing society: our biggest goal is to change this society full of discrimination. Rather than always seeking help from specialists and other people who offer help, we should strive to create the society we want with our own hands.

When I do peer counseling, I strongly

focus on the five things (shown below) that constitute our sense of well-being.

Five things that support our sense of well-being:

We want to love, and be loved.

We are very creative.

We are very intelligent.

We are full of joy.

We are strong and powerful.

In medical models, people with disabilities are told by specialists to work hard on rehabilitation and strive to become healthy like people without disabilities. But this is not so easy, so people with disabilities begin to lose confidence. In peer counseling we do not need these medical models. We share the same experience which helps us understand each other's feelings, and give and be given support. It is the first step towards a more social model.

#### **Sign Language**

There are few sign language interpreters in India, which makes it difficult for people with different disabilities to work together. This prompted me to study some sign language in Japan. My Japanese sign language is not adequate, but I learned its basic rules. I believe this experience will make it easier for me to learn international and Indian sign languages in the future.

#### **Barrier-Free**

For many developing countries, building a barrier-free society is the biggest challenge. We had never seen a completely barrier-free environment, so it is difficult to picture clear goals.

We "think" barrier-free might be this and that, but it is merely an image inspired by someone else. For the 10 months we were in Japan, we spent every day checking if particular locations were barrier-free. This experience enabled us to understand where we stand in our home countries, and have something to compare against, for our future goal-setting for barrier-free society.

#### **4. Changes that Happened to Myself**

##### **Self-Acceptance**

Before coming to Japan I was not very easy on myself. I always thought I had to work harder, and constantly criticized myself. If someone told me I was pretty, I felt insulted because I always believed that pretty women could not become strong leaders or exercise powerful leadership. But now, things are different. Having been able to accept myself, I have come to learn that I do not have to be perfect all the time.

##### **My Identity as a Feminist**

I cannot remember when I first became a feminist. In India, I saw so many issues associated with male dominance and subjection of women. In Japan I met many female leaders and participated in a number of conferences about women with disabilities. Each year there are 300 applicants to the Duskin leadership program. I am the one selected out of these 300 people. It means I have more

responsibility than before to work for the empowerment of women with disabilities in India, who live under very tough circumstances.

### Integration of Disability Studies and International Relations

Before coming to Japan, I was studying international relations, especially the relationship between Russia and Central Asia. I was particularly interested in Russia's economy and foreign policies. However, meeting many researchers of disability studies in Japan changed me. I realized the importance of disability studies. In future, I would like to integrate disability studies and international relations, to study the issues people with disabilities faced after the Soviet Union fell apart in 1991. I am certain that this research will deepen my understanding of people with disabilities.

### 5. My Dreams

Participation in this training was my childhood dream come true—the dream of someday visiting Japan. Now I have a new dream. It is India's people with disabilities living independently.

As the first step, I am going to initiate activities focusing on peer counseling. Peer counseling gives confidence and self-acceptance to people with disabilities. I think self-acceptance will make it a little easier for people with disabilities to live independently. I would like to continue my studies, while being involved in peer counseling and independent living



activities. Studying is like a fuel for my heart and brains, so I cannot stop. I think my research about Russia's people with disabilities will be very useful in the future.

When I was a child, I had many dreams other than going to Japan. I watched English programs on TV and wanted to be good at English. Now, professors at my university and friends studying in English tell me that the way I speak and write English is better than my Hindi. There is more. Where I was born, women do not study very much, but when I was a child I was dreaming about studying hard. Now, I am studying international relations at the largest and most famous university in India. In addition to these many dreams of mine, I actually have another big dream. It is so big that I haven't actually told anyone around me, but

now I am ready to share. It is to become the secretary-general of the UN. This is a dream I have nurtured since childhood, and now, as a grown-up, I know how big of a challenge it is. But I am not going to give up. I will be the first female secretary-general of the UN! I am going back to my country, with a strong belief that all my dreams will come true.

### 6. Words of Gratitude

These 10 months were so wonderful. It was like a dream. I thank everyone from the bottom of my heart, including the Duskin AINOWA Foundation, Japanese Society for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities, and everyone from the organizations who accepted me for my individual training. Thank you very much.



#### Training Schedule & Location

#### Individual Training Schedule

2015	
Jan. 13 - 21	Center for Independent Living "Higashiyamato"
Feb. 2 - 13	Japan National Assembly of Disabled Peoples' International (DPI-Japan)
Feb. 16 - 20	Human Care Association
Feb. 26 - 27	Training for Japanese sign language
Mar. 2 - Apr. 4	Center for Independent Living MUCU
Apr. 6 - May 17	Center for Independent Living 'RingRing'
* Except Apr. 27 - 28	

## We are peers.

\*nickname: Mona

At Center for Independent Living MUCHU, our training was centered around the personal history of our staff with disabilities. The pillar of the training was the process of how empowerment happens, beginning from life's obstacles faced by persons with disabilities. The training also included talks about how important, and also difficult, it is for persons with severe disabilities to live their own life in their community. I believe the training conveyed the importance of connecting with people and local communities, the importance of peers and creating places where one can feel a sense of belonging. And how, all of this, as well as play, is deeply intertwined with independent living movement.

Mona is a very intelligent, kind and fashionable lady with the love of cooking. She was also hard-working to the end. Sometimes it took us time to understand each other because of the language barrier. Sometimes she was stubborn. Everyone called her "Monapi" and in return she called everyone else "(whatever their names)-pi" . She interacted with everyone and was loved by everyone.

First Mona, I hope you fulfill your first dream of becoming a

university teacher in your homeland. India and Japan have different environments. India probably does not have any established system and you may face many hurdles. Despite all this, please don't give up and keep working on independent living movement. Tell your friends with disabilities in India about what you learned during the training in Japan, and expand your circle of people who share the same goal. If things get tough, remember the faces of the many friends you met in Japan. Have a strong mind. Remember, "I am not alone. I have my peers and because of them, I can be strong, kind and have fun." Keep working on your big dream of becoming the Secretary of the United Nations. Go forward, step by step. We may be geographically far apart, but we are peers. Know we are connected. Lastly- cheers to all the osteogenesis imperfecta fighters!

Kozo Hirashita  
Director  
Center for Independent Living MUCHU

## Join hands with your peers to change society in India

\*nickname: Mona

I remember the day Mona arrived. That day, it was raining so much. We met for the first time at the railway station exit. She had a full, very powerful smile. Soon afterwards, as we walked out of the station, the rain miraculously stopped. The training started therefore, with my impression of Mona being "a person who brings good weather."

Mona was intelligent, quick to learn, and was eager to try and overcome anything new. She loved debate and asking questions. If she was puzzled about something, she always verbalized it, never leaving it ambiguous. She also showed happiness and excitement about little things that others might overlook. We learned a lot from these attitudes. Her eagerness to learn sign language, and how quickly she mastered it, was almost beyond belief. For example, despite the short 6-week training period, she gave all her training summary presentation in sign language, and she even helped as a sign language interpreter for other people at the party.

Given that she was here with us for peer-counseling training, and sign language was something she learned on the side, it was remarkable. I think she intuitively knew the importance of a hearing peer counselor to speak in sign language, when welcoming people with hearing impairment.

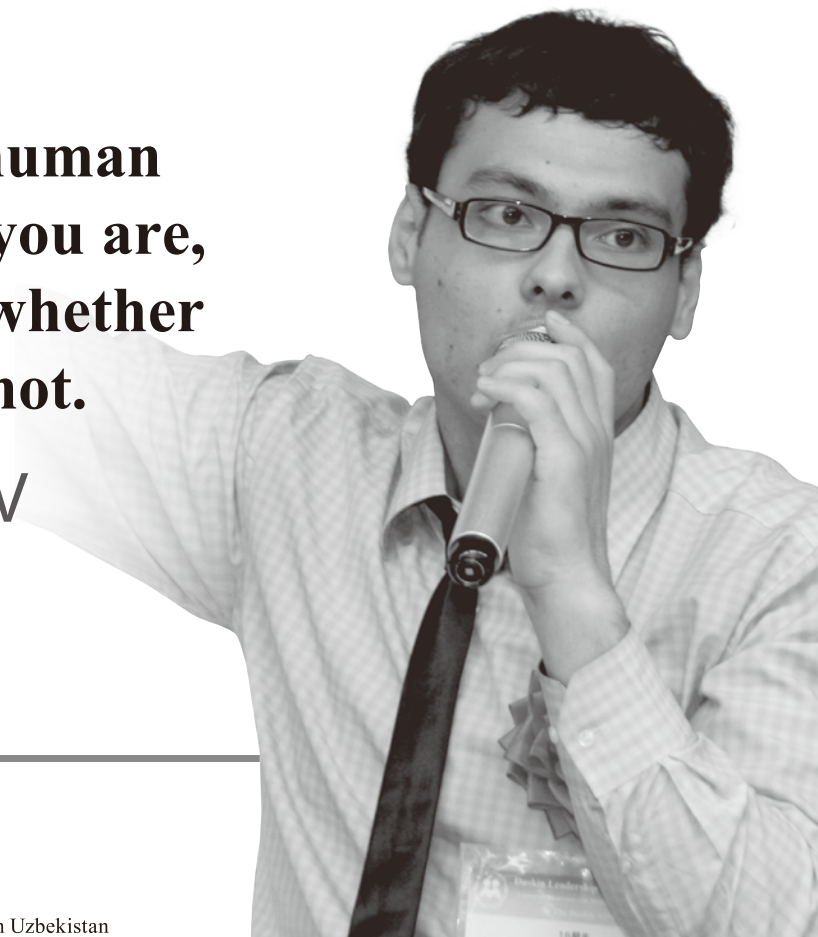
She made many friends. Their conversation was even more intriguing-- the subjects of their conversation always converged to sociopolitical issues such as discrimination against women, and the relationship between Gandhi and politics.

I hope that after she goes back to India, she can join hands with her peers to change society, maintaining her sound understanding and awareness for human rights.

Etsuko Nakao  
Director  
Center for Independent Living 'RingRing'

# Everyone has the same human heart. No matter where you are, no matter who you are, whether you have a disability or not.

## Dilshod NORMURODOV



Dilshod NORMURODOV, Navoi in Uzbekistan, 23 years of age  
Physical (Manual wheelchair)

### Fields of interest

- ① Lives of persons with disabilities in different countries
- ② Disability related laws in Japan & how to improve laws and regulations in Uzbekistan
- ③ Computer skills

My name is Dilshod, which means, “someone with an always happy heart.” I am also the first trainee from Uzbekistan chosen for this training. Although I knew quite a good deal about my own disability, I realized, after coming to Japan, that I hardly knew anything about other disabilities. It was also a big surprise for me, to see people with severe disabilities in Japan going freely outdoors. I had never seen anything like that before. I thought society where people with disabilities could freely live their own lives was wonderful. How everyone will be happy, if it is like that for all countries around the world.

### The First Five Months in Japan – Things I Enjoyed--

#### Japanese Lessons

For the first three months in Japan, we studied basic and key Japanese used frequently in everyday living. The teachers were very kind. To this day, I am communicating with everyone in Japanese, using the words taught by these teachers. The teachers always answered questions from us, however many questions we had. I enjoyed

these Japanese lessons more than anything else during the training, because I loved Japanese kanji characters. For us trainees, teachers were the most important people in our daily life in Japan. Thank you so much.

#### Home-Stay

For my home-stay program I visited and stayed with three different families: the Ota family in Kanagawa Prefecture and the Nakamori and Miyagi families in Okinawa Prefecture. In Kanagawa at the Ota family’s home, we celebrated mother (Mrs. Ota)’s birthday. Mrs. Ota cooked us wonderfully tasty food every day. The weather in Okinawa was good. Miyagi-san and I went to visit an ancient building from the Ryukyu era. We also put on



traditional clothes of Okinawa and took many pictures.

#### Skiing

Between January 23 and 26, we went skiing. It snows in my country, but I had never skied before. I had never even thought I could ski, so this was a huge surprise for me. The instructors encouraged us, saying that if we practiced with them, we would be able to ski in the end. I fell over so many times but I kept trying. It made me so happy when, eventually, I managed to ski.

### The Last Five Months in Japan – the Important Things--

For the next five months, I studied something that was very important for me personally. It was centers for independent living. Until then I wanted to have fun in Japan and wanted to just enjoy things, like sports for people with disabilities. During the individual training however, I came to know about Japan’s centers for independent living which was a great learning experience.

Let me explain about centers for

independent living. Suppose you are totally immobile because of your severe disability. You want to eat something, go somewhere, or meet someone, but you cannot do these things by yourself. What will you do? The answer: you decide what you would like to eat, where you would like to go, with whom, to do what, all by yourself, and then ask a center for independent living for support. The staff at the center for independent living acts as your arms and legs. They help you make what you want to do happen.

I first learned about centers for independent living at Center for Independent Living STEP-Edogawa, but I did not understand it 100% at the time. I was still thinking about having fun and playing sports. Then, I visited several centers for independent living in Okinawa, and was introduced to their activities through Mr. Arakaki, Ms. Nagai, and other members of staff.

The objective of the activities is to talk about the lives of people with disabilities, barrier-free society, and issues faced by people with disabilities, so that the government, school children and everyone in society will have a better understanding. These activities are very important, because they help people, who do not know much about people with disabilities, gradually understand about people with disabilities. In my country, no one knows about centers for independent living. No one even knows that they exist. I began to spend a long time thinking about how I could start a center for independent living in my country.

My next destination was Mainstream Association. At Mainstream, people with disabilities looked very happy



because they were able to do what they wanted to do. Seeing this made me realize that the most important thing for a person's life with disability is the concept of independent living. My feelings of wanting to establish a center for independent living in my country grew stronger. Consequently I visited many centers for independent living, to gain knowledge and learn more through each center's activities and problems.

My last training took place at Saito Kobo, where I learned about how to fix wheelchairs. Being able to go anywhere one wishes, using a wheelchair, is not unrelated to the concept of independent living, so I would like to start a company like Saito Kobo in my country. That way, people with disabilities can go anywhere, using wheelchairs.

I am very happy because I learned so many things from the people I met during my training.

### **Issues Surrounding People with Disabilities in My Country**

In my country, there are so many issues surrounding people with disabilities. They include the presence of so many barriers, the lack of people who know anything about independent living, and the lack of job opportunities for people with

disabilities. I would, however, like to solve these problems little by little. It is difficult to work on these issues alone, so first, I would like to gather some peers, and also consult with my family. To gather peers, I would like to tell many people about the things I learned in Japan. I would like to ask for opinions from students with disabilities at my university, and my friends with disabilities because they have good knowledge of law. I would then like to cooperate with my peers, to create a webpage carrying information about people with disabilities, not just targeted at people with disabilities, but everyone, including boys and girls, and people without disabilities. Through that webpage I would like them to know about people with disabilities, and plan various activities about disabilities. Then I will work with my peers to solve issues faced by people with disabilities. I do not have any concrete plans yet, but I will work hard, leveraging all the important knowledge from everyone.

### **To Everyone to Whom I am Grateful**

I would like to express my thanks to everyone, including my Japanese, swimming and ski instructors, everyone from Japanese Society for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities, my individual training and the Duskin AINOWA Foundation. Thank you so much. Your work is wonderful. You have helped people with disabilities from various countries of Asia, teaching them many important things in Japan, myself included. I am committed to work hard for people with disabilities after I go back to my country. The most important thing— "everyone has the same human heart. No matter where you are, no matter who you are, whether you have a disability or not."







### Training Schedule & Location

### Individual Training Schedule

2015	
Jan. 13 - 21	Center for Independent Living STEP-Edogawa
Feb. 2 - Mar. 6	Non Profit Organization Center for Independent Living 'Iruka Okinawa'
Mar. 10 - May 8	Mainstream Association
May 12 - 15	SAITO KOBO

### Message to Trainee

### Message to Trainee

## I strongly believe that you can become a leader of PWDs in Uzbekistan.

Congratulations on completing the one-month training at Center for Independent Living 'Iruka Okinawa' and North Center for Independent Living Kirara. I wonder how you are now back in your home country. The strong impression I have of you, is you asking people "what is this?" or looking up a dictionary every time you came across words or situations you did not comprehend.

I also remember the day your training started at Kirara. That day, we had to go to Ishigaki Island for a session of public training about regulations for inclusive and enjoyable society for everyone, with or without disability. We landed in Naha Airport and flew on to Ishigaki, and you rolled your eyes, surprised we were to switch to another airplane.

Okinawa consists of islands. We had a very busy, packed, yet very empowering schedule-- travelling between the main island and other remote islands, visiting Miyakojima Island, crossing Irabu Ohashi Bridge in wheelchair, visiting

local government and welfare organizations to organize and participate in public training for consultants to promote inclusive society, and experiencing welfare events at a primary school.

Our weekend schedule was also packed. Together with friends, on Saturdays and Sundays, we would go out, going fishing, watching professional baseball games, and visiting Okinawa Churaumi Aquarium.

I have high expectations for you—I strongly believe that you can build on everything you learned during the 10 months in Japan from Japanese disability and welfare organizations, to become a leader and develop welfare for people with disabilities in Uzbekistan.

Masaki Arakaki  
Director  
North Center for Independent Living Kirara

### Message to Trainee

### Message to Trainee

## Share the things you learned in Japan with your friends with disabilities, and use them for your future activities in Uzbekistan.

When you came to Mainstream Association for the first time, your Japanese was not very good. To be honest it was quite difficult to communicate. Every day, in your not-so-fluent Japanese, you tried very hard to tell me about your schedule, your training, and fun activities you enjoyed outside of the training. Do you remember, at Mainstream, you learned about centers for independent living, independent living programs, peer support and personal aids?

Please don't forget about the things we did and the places we visited, including Osaka Castle, Kyoto, and an excursion to Nagoya.

Towards the end of the training, your Japanese gradually got better and by the end, I was able to know more about

you. Also apologies for the farewell party, I was admitted to a hospital and could not attend. I was very happy that you came to visit me at the hospital before the party.

You often said "why?!" I agree. I also thought "why?!" about the things you questioned. Congratulations on completing your training.

Once you are back in Uzbekistan, share the things you learned at Mainstream with your friends with disabilities, and use them for your future activities. I would love to visit Uzbekistan someday, if there is a chance.

Biz sizga omad tilayman!!

Masayuki Hirata  
Mainstream Association

# A Journey to Success

## Md. Habibur Rahman MOLLAH



Md. Habibur Rahman MOLLAH, Tangail in Bangladesh, 30 years of age  
Physical (Manual wheelchair)

### Fields of interest

- ① Disability laws in Japan in comparison with those in Bangladesh
- ② Advanced management skills
- ③ Cooperation between disability organizations and government
- ④ Disability movement in Japan

### 1. Self Introduction

My name is Habibur Rahman Mollah. I am from Bangladesh. I have polio, a condition I have had since childhood. I am now 30 years old. I work as a volunteer for an organization in Bangladesh for people with disabilities. There are 11 members of my family, we all live together. I am the only one with a disability. Japan was the first foreign country for me. I got married a year before coming to Japan, so I missed my wife while in Japan, but there were many fun things in Japan. Japanese food and culture were interesting, and I had opportunities to visit many places. I was also very happy to go on the metro and shinkansen (the Japanese bullet train) for the first time in my life.

Sometimes I thought about Bangladesh and felt homesick, but Japan and Japanese people were both wonderful and fun.

### 2. Japanese Language / Home-Stay / Ski Training

Before coming to Japan I had no knowledge of Japanese. Even though I studied Japanese for three months after arriving in Japan, the language was still so difficult and made me worried from time to time. I did not know how to study, and I could not write hiragana and katakana. But my teachers were very kind and gradually my Japanese improved. While studying Japanese, we also had swimming training in a pool. I had never swum before so it was very enjoyable.

I also stayed at the home of a Japanese family for 10 days in Nagano, where I learned about Japan's culture, food, religion and law. Before going to Nagano I was worried if I could successfully complete the home-stay program because I was worried about the differences in culture and food, and also because I did not know anything about the host family. But they were

very kind, and the food was lovely. On our days off, all of us went fishing together and visited Shinto shrines, all of which was very enjoyable. In Bangladesh it never snows so I had only seen snow on television. I saw real snow for the first time in Japan. I was worried about our ski training because I did not know how I could ever ski. At first it set my pulses racing, but the ski teachers were very kind. I used bi-skis. On the last day of the training I managed to control the bi-skis by myself. This was a new experience for me.

### 3. Group Training and Individual Training

During the group training, I had a lot to study to become a leader for people with disabilities. Our study objectives included abuses and discriminations towards people with disabilities, law and movements concerning people with disabilities, and various disabilities including those of people of Asia with disabilities, and people with hearing / visual / physical impairments. I also learned about proposal writing. I consider the group training very





important as a source of new knowledge. There were also opportunities for us trainees to get together and talk about our feelings and future dreams.

During the individual training, I learned about issues surrounding people with disabilities, about barrier-free society, lives of people with disabilities, disability movement in Japan, welfare for people with disabilities, and national services for people with disabilities.

At the center for independent living, I learned about how people with disabilities live independently.

Individual training was very important for me because it is relevant to the many problems people with disabilities in Bangladesh face. Now I understand how Japanese people with disabilities live, and how people with disabilities can live an independent life.

At DPI-Japan, I learned about international seminars and laws for people with disabilities. As I learned about the international networks, I wanted to build an international network myself in the future.

I stayed at Center for Independent Living Hoshizora for approximately one month. In their small office, people with and without disabilities were working together. Something I thought was a very important part of the movement. I also learned about rehabilitation for people with disabilities. At Center for Independent Living Movement in Osaka, I went out into town with 40 wheelchair users, to check if supermarkets and railway stations were barrier-free. I also experienced fund raising.

At AJU Center for Independent Living, I learned about employment of people with disabilities, as well as how to repair wheelchairs, and about the history of disability movement. AJU

offers support to people with disabilities across Asia, and they taught me how it was done. The most memorable event during the training at AJU was a match-making party for people with disabilities. It was wonderful. I think the participants felt both happy and sad; happy if they found their date, and sad otherwise. In my home country, there are many people with disabilities with no chances of dating or marriage. I hope I can organize a match-making event like this in Bangladesh.

At Hakku no Ie (House of Hack) in Tanohata Village, I learned about mainstreaming people with disabilities. Forty years ago, Tanohata Village had a population of 8,000, but now it is down to 3,500. Declining population is a huge problem for a community, but at Hakku no Ie, everyone was working together—people with and without disabilities, old men and women, and people with difficult diseases. I thought it was a wonderful community.

## Summary

Duskin's leadership training program gives Asia's people with disabilities a chance to become a big family. I am so proud of becoming a member of the Duskin family. People with disabilities from across Asia are involved in various activities, after participating in this leadership training program. And gradually, Asia is changing, and becoming a place that is more accommodating for people with disabilities.

Though small, Bangladesh is a very energetic country. About 10% of the population has some kind of disabilities. People in Bangladesh are kind to people with disabilities, but there are still many issues, the biggest being the country not being barrier-free. Our law is not adequate for supporting people with disabilities, and there are few jobs for people with disabilities. Welfare is also not very good. I would like to work for a NPO for people with disabilities and solve these issues. I am committed to work with ex-Duskin trainees in Bangladesh, to work for people with disabilities. My long journey has only just begun.

I would like to express my utmost gratitude to everyone from the Duskin AINOWA Foundation, Japanese Society for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities (JSRPD), and everyone else who took me on board. Thank you so much.





Training Schedule & Location

Individual Training Schedule

2015	
Jan. 13 - 21	Center for Independent Living in Tsukuba, Honyara
Feb. 2 - 6	Japan National Assembly of Disabled Peoples' International (DPI-Japan)
Feb. 10 - Mar. 6	CIL Hoshizora (Starlit Sky)
Mar. 9 - Apr. 11	NPO Movement
Apr. 12 - 24	AJU Center for Independent Living
May 9 - 14	House of Hack

Message to Trainee

Message to Trainee

## My Memory of Habibur Rahman Mollah (nickname: Mizan)

For one month between March 9 and April 11, we had Mizan, one of the trainees of Duskin Leadership Training in Japan, from Bangladesh, staying with us. All of our staff awaited his arrival in excitement.

On the day he arrived, we had a welcome party for him in a typical Osakan style, preparing okonomiyaki – savory Japanese pancake. Mizan could not eat any pork due to his religion so we used other ingredients, avoiding pork. Still, he seemed to find the sweet okonomiyaki sauce unpalatable. Usually, having a meal together is the best recipe for communication so this made things rather difficult for everyone. For him, who was used to eating super hot curry three times a day in his homeland, Japanese food may have seemed rather odd. Given all these differences, Mizan worked hard on his training for the

whole year.

Mizan had a clear objective about his future. Through the DPO he established, he wanted to pursue activities for a barrier-free society and improve legislations regarding persons with disabilities. He tackled the training very diligently because of this clear goal. It was a wonderful experience for us to interact and spend time with him.

I hope when Mizan goes back to his country his hard working attitude will make all his dreams come true.

Kenji Fuchigami  
Director  
NPO Movement

Message to Trainee

Message to Trainee

## Let's work hard to improve Asia's welfare!

\*nickname: Mizan

We met Mizan for the first time at Nagoya City Handi Marathon, about one month after he arrived in Japan.

I remember thinking "will he be able to survive the next ten months?" when I saw the hard look on his face. A few months later, after a variety of training, Mizan came to AJU Center for Independent Living. He was slightly reserved just like before, and as I had expected, seemed slightly homesick.

I continued to worry about him. I was wondering whether he would be able to drive himself actively for the rest of the training and beyond. Luckily something happened and my worries were blown away. I asked him whether he wanted to take wheelchairs back to Bangladesh, if there was anyone who needed them. Usually, Mizan is very thoughtful and thinks

carefully before he says anything. But this time he was quick. "Yes! But not for myself. I have friends in Bangladesh who need wheelchairs." The next day, he came to me with a list of his friends who needed the wheelchairs. Mizan was very determined. He successfully took five wheelchairs to Bangladesh, giving them a higher priority than his own luggage. During the training Mizan probably had a lot of time thinking by himself. But in his homeland he has many friends. Mizan, I hope that you nurture your kind heart that puts others before yourself, and together with us, your friends and peers, let's work hard to improve Asia's welfare!

Natsuko Koide  
AJU Center for Independent Living

# New Hope for Persons with Visual Impairment in Laos with my experience in Japan

## Viliya CHANCHALEUN



Viliya CHANCHALEUN, Vientiane in Laos, 27 years of age  
Visual Impairment (Low vision)

### Fields of interest

- ① Education for persons with disabilities
- ② Employment of persons with disabilities
- ③ Psychology of persons with disabilities
- ④ Sports for persons with disabilities

### 1. Things I did in Japan during the 10-month Training

My training in Japan consisted of 3 main themes. First, I took a Japanese course which was very fundamental and important for this training because most of the time I lived in Japan, I had to use Japanese. I am very pleased to have learnt it because the Japanese language is one of my favorite languages. I did have difficulties during the course because I was not really familiar with using Braille, but it was a very nice experience.

Next, I stayed at the homes of Japanese families. It was one of the many experiences I had in Japan. While I was staying at their homes, I managed to learn about Japanese culture and lifestyle which I could compare with those of my home country, to see similarities and differences.

Finally, I went through individual training which was a very important part of this program. During the individual training, I learned many things that were very new for me. I will take these experiences back home

and build on them to improve the life of the visually impaired in Laos. Also, I can also give them hope through my experiences in Japan.

### 2. Training and Learning in Japan

Before coming to Japan, I was very curious about learning new things concerning persons with visual impairment, particularly Japan's education and employment system. After arriving in Japan, I got to know and learn many things that motivated me to do more to improve the lives of the visually impaired in Laos. I also learned about barrier-free social infrastructure and devices for disabled people. For instance, in the public transport sector, they incorporate sound in the train so that persons with visual impairment can understand where they are, including the station. This is why I managed to travel by myself during the individual training period.

I also observed that blind people in Japan, especially university students and employed people use very

high-tech devices at work such as: screen readers, magnifiers and Braille displays. However, in Laos, there is not even a Lao screen reader, and it is very tough for us. Besides education and employment, I also learned about sports and producing DAISY for persons with disabilities. See below, for what I learned during my training.

#### 2-1. Education System

In Japan, there are schools for the blind and inclusive study is also available, which is quite similar to Laos. However, the difference is Braille books and DAISY books, provided in these Japanese schools. This means there are more opportunities in Japan for persons with visual impairment, and they can use Braille text and DAISY books in class because Japan has a large number of libraries which accommodate Braille and DAISY books for the blind. Special schools in Laos do not have Braille books. Furthermore, we do not have DAISY producers, which is another thing inhibiting information access.

## 2-2. Employment

I visited workplaces that employed persons with visual impairment. I saw that persons with visual impairment could collaborate with non-disabled people because they had the help of special devices at work such as: PC talker and Braille displays. This is why the blind in Japan have more employment opportunities.

## 2-3. DAISY Production

DAISY books are audio books for persons with visual impairment. For the first time, I learned how to produce DAISY books at ATDO during my individual training. I think DAISY is very important because persons with visual impairment can use these audio books to access information, listening to the material. Besides, DAISY books are quite easy to take to other places. Now in Japan, the number of DAISY users is on the increase. On the contrary, special schools in Laos do not have a main center to produce DAISY books, even though they can be important learning materials for daily use by the blind.

## 2-4. Sports for Persons with Disabilities

During the training at ADDP, I watched sports for disabled people especially goalball for the blind. I



participated in the training session of the Japanese national team where I learned new rules and techniques that could be applied to and developed by the Lao team. I also watched wheelchair basketball at Sun Industry in Oita Prefecture where work and sport were done in the same location, an innovative approach for other areas in Japan.

## 2-5. My Personal Development

Living in Japan, I had a lot to learn and I also had many experiences, the most notable of which was learning how to live alone. When I lived in Laos, I usually asked for others' help, especially from the members of my family. But living in Japan, I had to take care of myself and it made me more confident and ready to tackle problems by myself. This was a good experience. I also learned how to get along with fellow trainees and support each other, and I also got to know how to live in a different society.

## 2-6. Future Plans after Returning to Laos

First, I will get ready for the training

of the blind sport team because we are going to participate in the Singapore ASEAN para-game this coming December. Next, I will renew the library at our special school and create a DAISY production room. Now, we do not have any specific section for DAISY books, so it will be a great place to start promoting DAISY books in Laos. It will also give opportunities and hope to students with visual impairment. On top of that, based on my knowledge and experiences from Japan, I would like to take matters to the governmental level to change the situation for blind students in Laos. The students cannot attend university because university principals lack the experience of teaching persons with visual impairment. I would like to bring to Laos the situations I have seen in Japan.

## 2-7. My Gratitude

I would like to express my warm regards to Duskin, JSRPD, my teachers, my host family, volunteers and everyone else who helped me during my training and stay in Japan. Thank you very much indeed.



### Training Schedule & Location

### Individual Training Schedule

2015

Jan. 13 - 15

Feb. 2 - 6

\*Feb. 4 - Holiday

Feb. 19 - 20

Jan. 16 - 21

Feb. 9 - 13

Feb. 16 - 17

Feb. 23 - 27

Mar. 3 - 28

Apr. 1 - 3

Apr. 25

May 6 - Jun. 13

Apr. 7 - 14

At Ease Inc. (computer school)

Assistive Technology Development Organization (ATDO)

Nippon Lighthouse Welfare Center for the Blind

Asian Development with Disabled Persons

Guitar (Learning Playing Method)

## Chigong! Good Luck with Your Future in Laos, as a Sports Instructor for Persons with Disabilities!

\*nickname: Chigong

Chigong was one of the trainees of the 16th Duskin Leadership Training in Japan. By a stroke of good fortune, we welcomed him to train at ADDP for three weeks, with the last two weeks spent on joint-training with government officials from Laos' Ministry of Education and Sports. The officials were in charge of sports for persons with disabilities and it was a good opportunity with plenty to learn including the needs and personal viewpoints of persons with disabilities. It is expected that from now on, the liaison between Chigong and the officials will be strengthened.

Chigong is working hard as a teacher at a school for the blind, at the national medical rehabilitation center where he works. There are more than 10 lived-in students at the school, from six year olds to students over the age of 20. Chigong is the good, most trusted teacher for these students.

Right now Chigong is burning with a new hope! He is a candidate of sports instructor for persons with disabilities, to

teach sports including goalball. In Laos, if you look at each disability, the most united group with the largest number of potential leaders is the group of people with visual impairment. In sports too. The women's goalball team, mainly comprising teen students from schools for the blind, won the silver medal in ASEAN Para Games held two years ago in Myanmar.

"Goalball gives energy to persons with visual impairment. I would like to be a coach for these people and lead the team, so that they can come and talk to me whenever they like," said Chigong, with passion.

Chigong is very cheerful, fun, excellent, and thoughtful.

Don't give in to obstacles Chigong. Be a leader and pave the road for Laos' people with visual impairment. ADDP is always with you, running by your side in Laos! Go! Go! Chigong! Go! Go! Laos goalball team!

Yuki Nakamura  
Secretary-General  
Asian Development with the Disabled Persons  
(ADDP: Non-Profit Organization)

## Be a leader and pave the road for Laos' people with visual impairment.

\*nickname: Chigong

At the beginning, I saw you often say, "I am worried. Only two weeks for the DAISY training. I am not sure if I can memorize everything." As the training progressed, we heard you say this less and less. You revised hard at home after the training at the office finished, including weekends, and the technology and knowledge gradually became yours, boosting your confidence.

You were also quick to remember the route to the office. At first, you always had chicken for lunch. Gradually you reached out for many other things and enjoyed a wider variety of meals. Do you remember us enjoying that buckwheat noodle together? I also remember the cherry blossom party by the river close to the office. It was fun and beautiful to see the petals dancing and falling in the warm spring sunshine.

Chigong teaches students with visual impairment. He has clear

objectives. His attitudes and motivation towards the training were very noble and respectable. We are certain that when he returns home, he will immediately convert all the textbooks and teaching materials into DAISY and improve the learning experiences of people with visual impairment in Laos. It would also be wonderful if he could cooperate and coordinate his activities with his friends in Vietnam and Thailand.

Without doubt he will be active in many other areas, including musical performances and sports. You are very diligent Chigong, and you have the power to move things forward. We hope you use these assets and everything you learned and experienced in Japan to expand and develop your activities. You have our full support!

From all of us at ATDO



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